**Will the Yezidi Persecution Lead to Their Extinction in the Near Future?**

**By**

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# Methodology:

This research is conducted to examine the Yezidi situation in Iraq through their experience before and after the emergence of ISIS. This paper will study the impact of the many genocides the Yezidis went through as a minority since their existence as a religious community. Moreover, this research is going to examine whether the exodus of Yezidis will lead to their persecution in the future or not. The paper aims at investigating the history of the Yazidis and providing evidence on what the future will be like for the Yezidi communities in the world.

First, this research will examine the history of the Yezidis through multiple books and academic journals about the Yezidis in general. These sources will allow the paper to manifest a broader view on the Yezidi religion and beliefs, which is the main reason for their persecution.  This paper will examine how the Yezidis have suffered through history from genocides and oppression by other sectors and religions. Furthermore, this paper will explore other genocides and persecutions and comparing similar events to the Yezidi case. The Jewish, Armenian, and Serbian genocides will be uses as examples of how persecutions against minorities have been conducted similarly to the Yezidis’ case.

Second, this research will recognize how the Yezidis experience persecution and exodus through interviews with Yezidi people who have fled ISIL. These interviews will be based upon the Yezidi people’s experience, and specially the Yezidi women who have lived through the oppression of ISIS and survived. There are many organizations that are taking over these cases some as a medical care and other as human care. These interviews will provide further insight to my research paper by including real life stories about Yezidis’ experiences with ISIL. In addition, statistics and numbers were used from Yazda Organization and other reliable Yezidi sources. Furthermore, recent news, analyses, and opinion articles were used.

# Literature Review:

There have been many studies and works conducted in regard to ethics’ conflicts and the extinction of minorities by majorities. The Yezidi case is a great example for illustrating how a small minority has being killed, raped, and almost extinct for their beliefs. The Yezidi religion focuses on worshipping the sun and believing in God first as well as Melek Taus, the Yezidi Angel in the sky second. The book,” Peacock Angle” by E.S. Drower provides an overview on the Yezidi beliefs and rituals. As the book stated, “ God for them is in the sun” which tells what exactly Yezidi believes in and worship. For other ethnicities and religions and especially Muslims, Yezidis are considered to be Devil worshipers and the unbelievers who deserve to die. This mentality has put the Yezidis in the same path as the other ethnicities and minorities in the world who have been killed and persecuted for their beliefs. Jewish religion has faced similar situation in which they were forced to leave their homes in order to survive. The book “The Immigration of the Iraqi Jewry to Israel” examined the Jewish people’s case in Iraq who were forced out of their home land by the Iraqis. The life of many Jews who were known for being peaceful and a prominent part of the Iraqi society before they left their homes undesirably in order to survive. As stated, “We are part of this people, here we live” these words tells that Jews were unwilling to leave their lands and properties, but they did for the sake of surviving. Moreover, Armenians have also faced genocides by the Ottoman Empire, which is known as one of the most powerful empires in the history. The literature review asserts that the genocide that has happened to the Armenians and the Assyrians during the Ottoman Empire in the 1915 had resulted in the death of many as well as taken their women as sex slaves for the same reason. The Ottoman Empire and Sunni Muslims have considered these events as support that can guide them to the right path of Islam. As stated by the author,” There are always considered *guvar*” which is the same word that Muslims call Yezidis as “unbelievers”, which means guvar. Later on the book “America and the Bosnia Genocide” examines the ethnic conflict in Serbia and the life of Omarska camp. The horrible life conditions that Bosnians men and women were forced to live due to their beliefs which is the reason of the death and burial of many who have been a great community by now. Another research has been conducted on the Serbian ethnic conflict tells about the fair of change by the elite who would want to rule, but the rise of ethnic groups scare them to the point of having conflict. Religion or political power the result is the same and minorities and ethnicities are dying by majorities. Lastly, the study “Jewish Intermarriage in American Society” discusses the life of the Jewish in other countries, especially in America is best describe the life after being extinct. This research will explain how difficult it was for Jewish to adapt their new life away from their original homes. The case in this research involves the marriage of Jewish and a Christian, which considered rare for Jewish families because they have to adapt to a different lifestyle. Here the Jewish people are facing the issue of losing their identity in order to have a peaceful life and be part of the country that they have immigrated to. This is the same case for the Yezidis who are trying very hard to find a life in Europe and other parts of the world which could cost them to sacrifice their identity for better life.

# Introduction: Who are the Yezidis?

The Yezidi religion is one of the main religions in Iraq that is concealed, disliked, and misunderstood by other religions, especially by Islam. Through history, the Yezidis have gone through many genocides and massacres in order to be eliminated from history. Their ideologies and beliefs have been always not preferred in a place where the majority are of Muslims. Their lives have been always in danger of eliminating and abolishing for being a Yezidi religion follower. In the past, there were no schools for the Yezidis and no education was offered for them, so they all grew up uneducated and this contributed in making the Yezidi religion unknown and misunderstood to people. There was no Yezidi to give a clarification of the Yezidi religion and show the whole world that it is a religion like any other religion in the world. Lack of education and knowledge made it hard for them to introduce themselves to the world. Thus, their ideologies and beliefs were left ambiguous to the whole world. All of the genocides, massacres, wars, and oppressions that they have been gone through are due to whom the Yezidis worship, Melek Taus, who is the head of the angels that Yezidis believe in and how the Muslims has misunderstood this belief. Melek Taus has been the main conflict between Muslims and Yezidis because Muslims interpret Melek Taus as the devil. According to Yazidies Religious Beliefs: History, Facts, And Traditions of Iraq's Persecuted Minority, “They believe that once God created Adam and Eve, he ordered the angels to bow to his creations. While the other angels did so, Melek Taus was the only one to refuse, because he believed that he should submit to no one but the Supreme.”said Hafiz Yasmine. To the Yezidis, God tested the angels and the only angel that did not pass this test was Melek Taus because he refused to bow for Adam and he had to bow only for God. And according to the Muslims because he did not do what God ordered him to do, he was sent to the earth to be the devil. Thus, Muslims call the Yezidis devil-worshipers and for this reason they have been rejected by the other religions. Moreover, since the Yezidis do not have a holly book as Islam and other religions do, they have been called infidels by the Muslims. Also the Muslims have a strong believe Yezidis should convert to Islam, and if not, they will be killed, their properties will be ruined, their women will be taken as slaves, and their children will be taken to Muslim families in order to make them Muslims when they grows up. In this research paper, I will be talking about the Genocide and the massacres that the Yezidis went through. Also, how this tragedy still following them and it might get them into extinction.

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## Why Genocide against Yezidis?

Based on what was mentioned earlier in the introduction, due to their belief, they have gone through many genocides and massacres. Until today, there have been seventy four genocides committed solely against Yezidis by Muslims. This misunderstanding between the two parties has led the Yezidis feel unwelcomed in Iraq and the numbers of Yezidi families decline each day. The first genocide of Yezidis happened in 630 AD and until latest one has been by ISIL. It has been estimated that twenty three million Yezidis have been killed since the seventh century (YezidiTruth.org). This indicates that if those twenty three million Yezidi were not killed, they would have created a huge population as big as the Muslims or Christians. They would have been given their basic rights as any other human beings. Moreover, the incentive that drives the Muslim extremists to commit crimes against Yezidis is based on the belief that they will be awarded in the other life with seventy two virgins. For this reason, some Muslims think that killing Yezidis is favorable by God and those who do will be awarded in heaven. Not all Muslims have this mentality because there are still tolerant Muslims who do not believe in killing and hurting other people with different religions. Some Muslims believe Yezidis do not have a true religion, but will still consider them as a sect of Islam .There are also Muslims who respect Yezidi religion and do not call them infidels or devil-worshippers. A good example of such a case can be seen at AUIS where there are Yezidi students who have many friends that do not difference with them based on their religion. But this is a rare case in such an educational community as misinformation about Yezidi religion has been always widespread among the Iraqis. In Iraq, under the regime of Saddam Hussein, the Yezidis were denied from medical care, insurance and having jobs in the government. Yezidis the worst treatment from the post regime of Saddam Hussein because he also considered the Yezidis as infidels and he did not give them their rights and also killed many Yezidis who helped the Kurds in the 90s. According to YezidiTruth.org, “Throughout the Middle East it was no secret that Saddam Hussein’s goal was systematic cultural genocide of the Yezidis. Under his savage regime the Yezidis were uprooted from their villages, their farmland taken, and they were denied both jobs and medical care” (YezidiTruth.org).

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# Genocide in the history of the Yezidis:

Genocide or in many clear ways is the killing of a race or group of people. As I have mentioned above, Yezidis have faced this barbaric action for almost two thousand years and four seventy four times. In every time they face Genocide, they lose the lives of their young men, their women, and children. Millions and millions where killed and others were abducted as slaves by invaders. If we look deep into the history of Yezidis, we will see that they have gone through much Genocide to the point when they are asked about Genocide; they say that their great grandfathers had gone through this and now they are going through this again and again. Yet, they hope that their children will not go through the same. The age of this religion is 6745 years old and for the last two thousand years they have faced seventy two Genocides in order to eliminate the ideology of Yezidism from the region and the whole world. However, mountains were a place for the Yezidis to hide for years and years so they can survive, and yet they did survive through all of the marginalization from other religions in the region especially Muslims. Yezidis always mention the stories of their great grand fathers that are passed to them and you can hear it in the songs of Yezidis that talk about the genocide and especially in the era of Ottoman Empire. For instance, there was a song about Fareq Basha of how he led genocide against the Yezidis in Sinjar city. The Ottomans have led many and many genocide against Yezidis under the name of Islam, killed the ones who was not converting, took the women as salves, and children to be fighter in the army when they grow.

## Genocide in the modern life by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL):

Since the Ottomans were kicked out of Iraq by the British Army, Yezidis were given more space and no genocide was done to them. All of these years passed and Yezidis lived as a normal society in Iraq and could rebuild their cities that once were taken by the Ottoman Empire. However, during the Al Qaeda war against American military and other minorities in Iraq, in 2007, Sinjar city and area of mud and stone house went through two trucks bomb explosions in the middle of Sinjar city. As it was mentioned in *The New Yok Times* magazine that , “This attack lead to the death of more than 250 dead and 300 wounded and other who are under the 200 flattened house ” (Glanz, James). This was linked to Al Qaeda who publically declared their responsibility of Sinjar city’s explosion and their aim to kill the Yezidis.

This made the Yezidis to recalculate and rethink of their lives, so some decided to leave Iraq and immigrate to Europe due to the fear of another truck bomb in Sinjar because there was not a good security to prohibit external threats such as Al Qaeda . Furthermore, life continued and more security was given to Sinjar city after the truck bombs and people went back to their normal life with their Arabic Muslim neighbors.

Life was hiding a bigger threat for the Yezidis than a truck bomb. The history repeated itself and Yezidis went through another Genocide by what is known the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL) and the same scenario repeated. In August 3, 2014, ISIL invaded the city of Sinjar seeking killing and kidnapping women and children. Three thousand of men were killed and between 5000 to 3000 women were kidnapped and many others ran away and hid in the mountain of Sinjar where they entrapped and its adjacent villages. The condition lasted for three days without food and water only the sound of bullets, screams of children and the sounds of wailing women were heard. During these three days many children died from hunger and thirst.

There is no clear statistics of the amount of men, women and children who died because they are still discovering new mass graves in Sinjar city that made by ISIS. From the report that Yazda Organization published Yazda Issues Public Report on Yazidi Mass Graves in Sinjar (Shingal), “IN MANY SITES IN Shingal there were mass graves that we were able to discover such as, Khanasor 1 where 80 bodies were found, Hamadan where At least 21 Yazidis and other sites where the number of dead people is unknown such as ,Khanasor 2,, Hardan 1.” (Yazda Organization). Not all the Mass graves discovered yet and it is expected that there are a lot of mass graves will be found in the upcoming years.

## Sex Slavery by ISIL:

The most painful part of the Yezidi Genocide was the sex slavery of the Yezidi Women. Yezidi women were taken by ISIL to be sold between the fighters of ISIL. This sex slavery of the Yezidis is not a new case that has been done by the terrorists of ISIL. Back in the history, Yezidi women had been taken as sex slaves during the Ottoman Empire and still this kind of genocide is repeating itself. The day Sinjar was invaded by ISIL; they took most of their women and sold them in the markets of Syria and Mousl. According to the BBC News, “ISIL abducted around 5000 Yazidies women and took them to Mosul and Syria where they were sold in slavery market in Raqqa IN Syria and Mosul In Iraq” (Wood). Their women were sold and fighters get women and buy women because they serve for ISIL. Prices were written on a piece of paper and were put on their bodies for the customers. In addition, the younger the girl is, the more expensive her price will be. Also, if the girl is virgin, her price will be much expensive than the others. As Paul also stated, *“*can be bought, sold, and given as gifts; they can be disposed of as property if a fighter dies. And the women were gathered in large halls and distributed as the spoils of war. Foreign fighters usually chose first, then the local leaders of IS” (Wood).

Thousands of women have escaped ISIL telling us many stories like the story of the women whom I interviewed, Jnaa Saido. I asked her, “why did not you ask them why only the Yezidi women?” She answered me saying, “This was my first question to one of the ISIL Leaders when he came to pick up girls to sleep with. He said based on our religion, you are our right and we have the ability and the right to sell you, sleep with you and beat you.” She kept saying that ,” when I was there and I saw no help from any one not even the government, no international support, I knew that I am alone but I stole a phone from one of the ISIL soldiers when he took me with him in order to call for help. And I promised myself once I escape I will leave Iraq forever.” I asked her but why not staying if there is security? She answered me saying that, “I have nothing now, most of my family members left and others died and this country reminds me of the disgusting actions of ISIL which bring many terrible feelings to me.” My last question for her was that, “Who will help you to leave Iraq? Your family will help you?” She said “There is a German program that is called the Airway bridge for Yezidis women escaped from ISIL . This program helps us to leave Iraq and live in Germany under the government’s protection.” She continued saying that,” Hundreds of the Yezidi abducted women have left through this program and I will go as well.”

Here we should have a deep thinking about what this example told us and what one of the thousands women have gone through. She does not feel safe here anymore; living here brings back many harsh memories to live with. Moreover, most importantly, there is a free program that will take her to Europe where many of her friends and family have more protection and security. This have reduced the amount of thousands of Yezidi women in Iraq , beside to the ones who died, there are many Yezidi women who committed suicide and want to end their life because they feel ashamed for being raped and taken by ISIL. Also, the ones that escaped from ISIL came back with psychological issues and do not want have contact with men anymore.

Nadia Murad, who is another example of the Yezidi survivors from ISIL, has gone through a very tough condition when he was a sex slave in the hands of ISIL. She is the Yezidi woman who bravely talked about her story in the United Nation and burst the members into tears by her horrific story. She emphasized by saying, “We were not worth the value of animals. They raped girls in groups. They did what a mind could not imagine,” (Murad). She finally could escape after torturing and live her life again by telling the whole world about her horrific story.

## Yezidi Immigration:

Immigration is another issue that needs to be considered in the Yezidi case. Many Yezidis who are giving it all just to find a safe and peaceful life away from their home land. After ISIS, Yezidis have found out that there is no home or life for them in Iraq and immigration is their first and best choice. Thousand of Yezidis have decided to leave everything behind and take their way to Europe, a place where they will not be killed or persecuted for their beliefs. As a young mother states, “There’s nothing I need. I don’t need money, clothes, a car, a house. I only need one thing: to leave Iraq forever.” (The Kurdistan Tribune). All they want is a quiet place where they can live peacefully without war and genocide. They have chosen the cheapest and most dangerous way to escape from Iraq which is the sea. The Aegean Sea is their destination which is very dangerous and scary but the Yezidis faced all the kinds of death and they are ready to face this kind of death again just to survive. This sea was another way for the Yezidis to die in which hundreds were drown due to the large numbers in the same boat. The most horrible and dangerous ways were used to help the Yezidis escape violence in Iraq. The sea has taken many Yezidi lives which are another way for them to be extinct. Through immigration, most Yezidis died as well as many arrived in Europe for living in peaceful life. The unfair treatment for the Yezidi families made them to reach a point where they want nothing except leaving Iraq. There was no support or help from any parts of the Iraqi government or the national communities to make their path easier and less dangerous. Hundreds of Yezidi children died in the Aegean Sea but the world didn’t react or give any kind of support while the Syrian kid, Iylan who died in the sea the same as the Yezidis gain all the emotions and support of the world. In addition, a Yezidi kid died from hunger in the mountain of Sinjar the same way Iylan died but Iylan’s death grabbed all the attention of the world while that Yezidis kid’s death remained ignored by the national communities. The Yezidis have been persecuted, killed, raped, and tortured without any reaction from the Iraqi government or the national communities.



**Interviews:**

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Khaled Aloka, a Yezidi writer form Bashiqa is one of the people whom I interviewed due to his knowledge and intellectual understanding about the Yezidi case. I have asked him few questions in regards of the Yezidi situation and his view for the long term.

My first question was: from your perspective as a writer, what do you think about what happened to the Yezidis in August 8?

**A**: The reasons behind what’s happening to the Yezidis are their being a weak minority. Second, to grab world’s attention for the unjust conditions they are going through. Thirdly, Yezidis are going through bad conditions because of the aggressive conflict of the religious views in the Middle East. Finally, in the absence of the ideologies, the religion appears at its peak which means its poison exceeds. This answer and his view in general emphasize my paper from the point that why Yezidis? And why this aggressive attack that led to the death of thousands of this peaceful community.

My second question was: Do you think that the Yezidis immigration will merge their cultures with the West?

**A**: Yes, the immigration affects their culture and religion because of the western style but after hundred years, it might have a negative effect on the Yezidis and weaken it. This answer emphasizes my point about the Yezidi immigration and their merge with other cultures and ethnicities. Yezidis are immigrating in large number to escape the bad life condition they are facing in their home land but this might led in the long run to decline their numbers. The Yezidi kids will be born and rise according to that countries’ believes and ideas.

My following question was: As a writer and activist, what do you think of the world’s reaction towards the Yezidi case?

**A**: Mostly only the West had opened their doors for the Yezidis especially Germany, France, and Sweden. But, unfortunately some of the Arab countries, Turkey and Iran had a very cold reaction to the Yezidi case because they support the idea of ISIS and accept the idea of Jihad of Islam. In this answer, he is pointing out to the idea of killing, which might be accepted at some degree and for some people or in better way, for some religions. ISIS, which stands for the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, believes that killing people who are not Muslims is Jihat and supported by their Muslims’ religion. If in this century we have people who are thinking this way, there will be no minorities left in the world in the next few years. His answer enriched my paper form the pint that even if Yezidis are not going to immigrate, they will extinct due to the ideologies and beliefs of the people in the areas they are living in.

My last question was: Did what happened to the Yezidis change the point of views of the world and other religions about them?

**A**: Yezidis name might have been heard more than before recently by the West, but most of the Middle Eastern countries did not respond because they do not accept other religions than Islam and consider Yezidi religion as the most disgusting religion. This answer was the one that made me truly believe that Yezidis will extinct in the future. The Yezidi girls that have been taken by ISIS are sold, raped, and killed with no mercy from the Iraqis or even in the areas that ISIS take place. Other religions and specifically Muslims believe that convincing people to change their religion is a good thing and they will get the reward in the other world. By this answer, my paper was enhanced because their extinct will happen eventually in Iraq since they are minorities.

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Name: Qasim Osman Rafu

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Mr. Qasim who is a Yezidi judge in Sulaimaniya Labor Court and a president of Sinjar Charity Association, gave me some information about how Sinjar was controlled easily by ISIS. Also, how Turkmen of Talafer opened the way for ISIS to enter Sinjar. In addition, the withdrawal of Peshmarga let ISIS enter Sinjar easily. He also gave us approximate numbers and statistics since he is writing a book under the name of “The Campaign of Yezidi Annihilation”. My questions were mainly about the numbers and statistics regarding the Yezidi genocide in Aguest3, 2014.

In regard of the number of Yezidis who have been taken on Auget3, Mr. Qasim gave me this answer:

What is the number of taken Yezidis?

**A**: 5872 (Not accurate). He stated that this numbers are not accurate because the attack on that day was very huge and there is was no time to pay attention for this numbers. His answer enrich my paper that take this number of people who are minorities means that only another attack like this will defiantly lead to extinct Yezidis form the world.

What is the number of escaped Yezidis?

**A**: 2364, 572 of them are children. Many Yezidis have escape ISIS by different ways. Some paid money, some made a deal with the people from Mosul and some get met good people. These people who have escaped are raped, tortured, and scared to death. Most of those people died after been escaped due to the sufferings that they faced there. My paper emphasize on the point that Yezidis will extinct in the future because of many reasons and this is another one which is the careless that is paid for their situation.

What is this number of collective cemeteries found in Sinjar?

**A**: 32. There is thirty two cemeteries that have been found in Sinjar so far because this has been found only in the freed places. There are many places still under ISIS and the numbers are not known. This answers made my paper stronger because the numbers showed how easy was killing the Yezidis in Iraq and the reason behind all this huge immigration.

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Ghanim Elias, the manager of Ghusain AL- Zaiton Organzation and Yezidi displaced in Erbil, is another person who I interviewed for better understanding and more enhancements on my paper.

My first question was: How many Yezidis are in Erbil?

**A**: Based on the last survey that our NGO made 20 days ago there are 750 families in Erbil. Those Yezidis are the one who escape ISIS from Sinjar and other places like Bashiqa and Bahzan.

My second question was: What are the mains issues that they are facing?

**A**: Yezidi IDPs see that there is no sufficient care from government and that there is lack of care in many aspects. They also look back at their history and current situation analysis of their life and how much they have lost a lot of family members and also most of their life earnings. As many of them says that leaving Iraq is the best solution to Yezidis, as many people already did leave Iraq.

My third question was: Do you think that many other people will leave as well?

**A**: From talking to people and listening to their stories, ideas, and dreams, I can tell you that there are many people want to leave Iraq to Europe where many Yezidis are living now. Even though there is a totally different life style there and it is very difficult for people who grew up here to adapt to this life style, but they will go and try to live normally in a safer place as they look for it.

My last question was: What are their demands?

**A**: They have many demands such as equality, rights, etc... However, I do not think that this will be applied in our country. We need time to reach this level of equality. Their demands also are about food, clothes, homes, jobs, etc... All of what I can tell you is that IDPs and especially the Yezidis must have a special care because they did not only lose their homes but also the life of many family members and that have affected on them.

# Conclusion:

Yezidis, the small peaceful community in Iraq have been facing persecution since seventh century due to their beliefs. They have gone through what other minorities in Iraq have not gone through. Their number is decreasing due to the Genocide that they have been facing thousands years ago. Their huge numbers of Genocide, sex slavery of their women, and their immigration to other countries might lead to their extinction in Iraq because nothing left for them to stay in a place where most of the people think that they are devil worshipers, terrorists using them and killing them. Therefore, it is expected that the extinction of the Yezidis happen soon due to the violation against them because of what they believe in.

As a Muslim Iraqi citizen, I am totally against this violence because it is against humanity and our discipline. This violation should be prohibited by the Iraqi government and they must protect them from ISIS. Also, they should help the Yezidis and give them their absolute rights as any other Iraqi citizens. They should not be differed from other citizens solely because they have a different religion. Other national organizations should provide all the help and security for them because they are the only minority that has suffered the most from ISIL.

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